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5-1-2013

Forage News [2013-05]

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Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, University of Kentucky, "Forage News [2013-05]" (2013). *Forage News*. 58.

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FORAGE NEWS



Research & Education Center
Princeton, KY 42445

For more forage information, visit our UK Forage Extension Website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>

May 2013

Garry D. Lacefield and S. Ray Smith, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary

ADVANCED KENTUCKY GRAZING SCHOOL, JUNE 18

The second Advanced Grazing School will be held at the U.K. Research & Education Center in Princeton June 18 beginning at 8:30 a.m. Registration begins at 8:30 with a field oriented forage tour in the morning. At lunch, Dr. Glen Aiken will speak on "Forage and Grazing Management for a year around Grazing System". Following lunch, a tour will feature three animal stops. Topics and speakers include:

- Managing for Long-term Profitability in Grass-Clover Pastures – Dr. Ben Goff
- Grazing Alfalfa and Other Advances in Alfalfa Production – Tom Keene
- Tall Fescue – New Varieties and the Opportunities they create on the Farm – Dr. Garry Lacefield
- Unique Advantages of Warm-Season Grasses for Grazing – Dr. Ray Smith
- Forage and Grazing Management for a year around Grazing System – Dr. Glen Aiken
- Latest Research on Minerals for Grazing Cattle – Dr. Roy Burris
- Managing Livestock on Warm Season Forages – Dr. Donna Amaral-Phillips
- Measure, Plan, Graze: Grazing Wedge Concept – Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler

The Registration fee is \$20.00 and includes lunch, breaks and materials. To register, send check in the amount of \$20 payable to the Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council to: Kelly Kramer, 804 W.P. Garrigus Building, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40546-0215. For more information, you may contact Kelly at 859-257-7512 or kelly.kramer@uky.edu.

KELLY KRAMER ACCEPTS UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY MASTER GRAZER COORDINATOR POSITION

We would like to introduce you to Kelly Kramer the Coordinator for the Master Grazer Program. Many of you know Lyndsay Jones who was the coordinator of the program over the last 2 years. Lyndsay has just started a master's degree in Crop Science at Colorado State focusing on hay production of alpine meadows. We wish Lyndsay the best and look forward to having Kelly as our new coordinator. The role of the coordinator is to help plan and implement our regular and advanced Grazing Schools, farm demos, pasture walks, edit and help write our monthly Grazing News, and many other responsibilities.

Kelly is originally from West Virginia and will be graduating May 5 from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor of Science in Equine Science and Management through the department of Animal Sciences. Kelly excelled in her undergraduate degree and is one of the top rated students graduating this year in Animal Science. She was involved in many extracurricular activities throughout University including the UK Dressage and Eventing team, and was an officer her senior year. One of the courses that Kelly enjoyed most was Forage Crops with Dr. Ben Goff. During the last year, Kelly has been an intern for the University of Kentucky Pasture Evaluation Program, and has been one the best interns or summer student (out of over 20) that we have had working with this program over the last 7 years.

USDA RELEASES CORN PLANTING INTENTIONS - US UP SLIGHTLY, KENTUCKY DOWN 50,000 ACRES

The USDA March Prospective plantings report was released yesterday, causing a thaw in market trading on corn. The report showed an increase to 97.3 million acres in corn for 2013 marking the highest acreage in corn since 1936.

In Kentucky, the report shows farmers intend to plant 1.6 million acres, down 50,000 acres from 2012. Dr. Cory Walters, associate professor for agriculture economics at the University of Kentucky, says the regular corn/soybean rotation is a large driver for planting adjustments, but last year's yield issues is most likely another. Wheat acreage is up 100,000 acres, and soybean acreage is up 20,000 acres. All hay harvested acreage is down 120,000.

Historically, the March report is an "intentions" report and could shift 15% as the planting season rolls along. In actual practice, the May 15 plantings report from the USDA more closely correlates with the final acres planted. (SOURCE: Kentucky Corn Growers' Association, Corn Connection, March 29, 2013)

HAY ACRES TO RISE SLIGHTLY

U.S. hay growers expect to increase acreage in 2013, but not by much.

According to the Prospective Plantings report, released by USDA last Thursday, March 28, growers intend to harvest hay on 56.4 million acres this year, compared to 56.2 million acres in 2012. In 2011, hay was harvested on nearly 55.7 million acres in the U.S.

Hay acreage is expected to decline this year from last year across most of the eastern U.S., the Southwest and the Great Lakes region. Record low acreage is expected in several New England states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. California could see hay acreage drop by 6% from what it was in 2012, to 1.45 million acres.

In contrast, Montana hay acreage is expected to increase by 23%, to 2.7 million acres, in 2013. Growers in neighboring Wyoming intend to harvest one million acres this year, an increase of 14% over 2012 acreage harvested. Arkansas is expecting record-high acreage of 1.49 million acres in 2013. (SOURCE: Hay & Forage Grower, eHay Weekly, April 2, 2013)

INCREASE PASTURE CARRYING CAPACITY USING CROSS FENCES

As your cows finish grazing corn stalks, don't put away your electric fence for the summer. You can use it to stretch your pasture.

Electric fence is the easiest and cheapest way to increase production from summer pastures. Dividing pastures with electric cross fences gives you more control of when and where your cattle graze. It helps you encourage cattle to graze pastures more uniformly and completely, including areas they normally avoid. And, it can help you improve the health and vigor of your grass by giving it time to recover and regrow after each grazing. As a result, your grass production and pasture carrying capacity will increase. This will be especially valuable this year following the stress of last year's drought.

I'm sure you've seen many ads promoting high-powered, high-tensile, imported electric fencing systems. I encourage using these systems in many situations – I use them myself sometimes. But, cross fences do not need to be permanent, nor do they need to be expensive. This is especially true if you already have electric fencing

your animals respect. And using fencing equipment you already have gives you an inexpensive opportunity to experiment with where you might eventually place a more permanent cross fence.

The electric fence that keeps your cows on stalks during winter can give you this inexpensive opportunity to try some cross fencing where you have been reluctant to try it before.

So, as spring growth of your pastures begins to slow down, use your winter electric fence to try some extra summer cross fencing of your pastures.

More grass, better gains, and better profits might be the result. (SOURCE: Bruce Anderson, University of Nebraska)

FOLIAR FUNGICIDES ON ALFALFA

Last year, Headline® fungicide received a federal label for control of foliar diseases of alfalfa. Headline® may be applied on all alfalfa production: for seed, for hay, or for silage (with a 14 day pre-harvest interval in all cases). See additional label restrictions.

The active ingredient in Headline® (pyraclostrobin) is in the strobilurin family of fungicides. This family is known for excellent control of many fungal diseases. There are numerous important alfalfa diseases in Kentucky that are reportedly controlled by Headline® (spring black stem and leaf spot, Lepto leaf spot, Stemphylium leaf spot, summer black stem and leaf spot, and common leaf spot). In addition to providing disease control, strobilurin fungicides, including pyraclostrobin, are also known for sometimes improving the overall physiological health of plants. Various physiological benefits have been observed in numerous plant species. However, these effects have been sporadic and unpredictable in the field.

Summary of public research

There are few public fungicide trials on alfalfa nationwide. Thus, last year we initiated a long-term spray trial on alfalfa. We also reviewed all the reports we could find reporting on field experiments evaluating strobilurin fungicides on alfalfa. The tests were conducted in 2010-2012.

The results of these analyses are shown in the table below, and key points are summarized:

1. In almost all comparisons, application of strobilurin fungicide reduced damage from foliar/stem diseases.
2. In spite of the reduction in disease damage, yield increase was observed in only five of 24 comparisons. Most of those yield increases occurred in earlier cuttings, consistent with manufacturer reports. When they occurred, yield increases were in the range of one- to two-tenths of a ton dry matter per acre.
3. Forage quality (measured in various ways; see table) was improved in very few comparisons. There were also several instances where quality was slightly reduced in the fungicide-treated alfalfa (data not shown, available on request).
4. The physiological "greening" effect of strobilurin fungicides was not reported in alfalfa in experiments where such observations were included in the report.

Parameter	Total no. comparisons*	No. beneficial responses**
Disease damage	24	21
Yield	24	5
Crude protein	16	2
Net energy for lactation	13	1
Relative feed value	5	1
Greening/senescence	5	0

*Each strobilurin fungicide in each cutting = a discrete comparison

**Beneficial responses" refers, for example, to the fact that 21 times out of 24 evaluations, strobilurin fungicide reduced levels of disease. Statistical discrimination among treatments at 10% error rate ($P \leq 0.1$)

Significance

It seems clear that application of a strobilurin fungicide generally reduces levels of foliar disease in alfalfa. However, in research thus far, strobilurin fungicide was associated with increased forage yield in only about 20% of comparisons. Forage quality has not been meaningfully improved by strobilurin fungicides in research thus far. This latter finding surprises us, because we would expect that improved leaf health would translate to improved forage quality, since

leaves represent high-quality forage. Continuing research is advisable, since the weather last year was unusually hot and dry, and results economically favorable to fungicide use could occur in wet growing seasons. (SOURCE: Paul Vincelli, UK Extension Plant Pathologist and Ray Smith, UK Extension Forage Specialist)

MIRACLE PRODUCTS AND FOO FOO DUST

Increase your profits and production for just pennies per acre. Haven't we all seen or heard such tempting claims about various products. But is it real?

You know the pitch. Maybe it's a bermudagrass that will yield 20 tons per acre. Or a foliar fertilizer that doubles alfalfa production. It could be a soil enhancer that makes water wetter or releases more nutrients from your soil. Or possibly a microbial inoculant that allows you to safely bale or store wet hay.

We've all heard these miraculous claims. And truthfully, they sound pretty good and often have some reasonable sounding explanation about why they work. It's hard not to be tempted to buy them.

But will they work? Now, I can't positively discount every single one of these miracle products. After all, we have a lot to learn about Mother Nature; and when we say something can't happen or is impossible, she sometimes throws us a curve to prove us wrong.

But let's face it. You know the old adage - if it sounds too good to be true, it probably isn't. Still, what if it is true? Why not take the gamble, just in case. After all, if you farm or ranch you gamble all the time on markets and weather. Why not gamble here?

Maybe the big question should be - how much should you gamble. I have no problem with trying something new. That's how we improve. But start slow. Spray a couple test strips. Plant just a couple acres. Treat a few bales. Make it prove itself before you bet the farm. If it really is good, the product will be available again next year. If the salesperson won't let you try just a little, just say no.

We all want something that will make us richer and our lives better. Just be careful not to jeopardize what you already have for a miracle product or some foo foo dust. (Source: Bruce Anderson, University of Nebraska)

OHIO CROP BUDGETS AVAILABLE FOR FORAGE GROWERS

Ohio State University (OSU) Extension is offering 2013 economic enterprise budgets for a variety of crops, including alfalfa hay, grass hay and alfalfa haylage.

In addition to cash expenses and depreciation, the budgets factor in opportunity costs of land, labor, management and capital.

"By including opportunity costs of labor and management in an economic enterprise budget, the user can determine whether the enterprise is economically viable in the time frame being considered," says Barry Ward, production business management specialist with OSU Extension.

The budgets, available here, are compiled on downloadable Excel spreadsheets that contain macros for ease of use. Growers input their production and price levels to calculate their own numbers. The budgets also have color-coded cells that allow users to plug in numbers to easily calculate bottom lines for different scenarios. Detailed footnotes are included to help explain methodologies used to obtain the budget numbers. (SOURCE: eHay Weekly, April 16, 2013)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAY 22-24 American Forage & Grassland National Tour, Graves Mountain Lodge, Syria, VA
- JUN 18 Advanced Grazing School, UKREC, Princeton
- OCT 10 Kentucky Grazing Conference, Fayette County Extension Office, Lexington

2014

- JAN 13 AFGC Dow Pasture Symposium, Memphis, TN
- JAN 17 Forages at KCA, Lexington, KY



Garry D. Lacefield
Extension Forage Specialist
May 2013